



**METROPOLITAN
HEALTH DISTRICT**

COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE & EQUITY COALITION COMMUNITY REPORT 2022



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Summary



In December 2019, a virus with unknown origins began to quickly spread across Wuhan, China. Unbeknownst to the rest of the world's population, this virus would quickly be classified by the World Health Organization as a global pandemic.

Through the years, the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health) has responded to new and emerging health threats. Metro Health benefits from strong partnerships with the county health system (University Health), regional trauma and emergency healthcare system (South Texas Regional Advisory Council), and key community and academic partners.

In the early stages of the pandemic, Metro Health convened a community coalition to support response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report describes the evolution of the coalition, from the original focus on COVID-19 testing to the forward-thinking goals and partnerships within the COVID-19 Community Response and Equity Coalition (CREC).

March 2020
COVID-19
Testing Task
Force Formed

May 2020
CRC Formed in
Response to
HTT

November 2020
CRC
Restructured to
CREC

April 2020
Health Transition
Team Report

August 2020
Resolution on
Racism



Testing Task Force



Developed and launched the COVID-19 self-screening tool

As COVID-19 cases soared globally and domestically, Metro Health convened a Testing Task Force to address the urgencies born of the pandemic.



Established guidance for COVID-19 specimen collection and laboratory testing

The **Testing Task Force** united laboratories, hospital systems, healthcare providers, community-based clinics, and Emergency Operations Center representatives to assess the COVID-19 testing capacity at the city and county levels. These partner organizations conducted COVID-19 testing, specimen collection, and processing.



Fostered partnerships with laboratories to increase free testing



Expanded testing to more marginalized communities

Phase 1

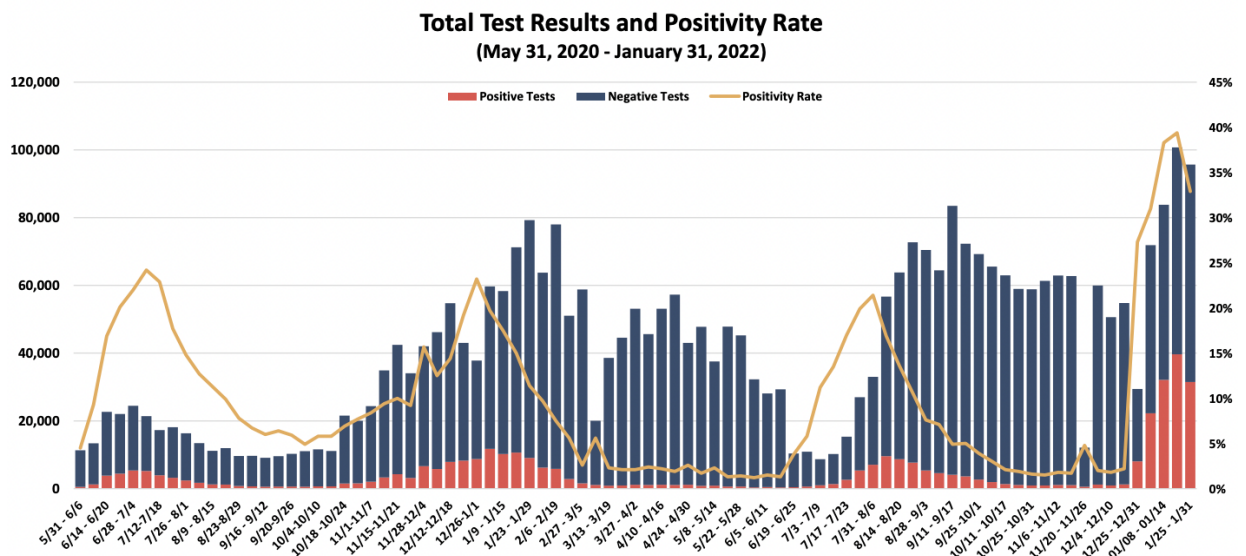
Phase 2



Dr. Tsai and UT School of Public Health Contact Tracing & Case Investigations Team

The City of San Antonio and Bexar County Health Transition Team's (HTT) April 2020 Report called for community-informed action, a recommendation which received broad support from city, county, and health department leadership. Metro Health responded to the recommendations by transitioning the Testing Task Force to the **COVID-19 Community Response Coalition (CRC)** in May 2020. The CRC continued to expand on the successes of the original task force by creating community workgroups to support the various aspects of the COVID-19 response.

Five workgroups and one ad hoc consultation group were created, each with a specific charge. This cross-sectoral collaboration permitted swift responses to counteract the most critical aspects of the pandemic's devastation. The CRC was co-chaired by a community-based public health leader and the Metro Health Director.



Indicator Monitoring Workgroup

Using the surveillance dashboard, key indicators dashboard, and self-screening and hotline data, this workgroup monitored public health indicators and shared developments with local and state elected officials. The group then created community education and related strategies to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

Contact Tracing Workgroup

The workgroup ensured the contact tracing workforce continuously met the ever-changing demand of positive cases identified, along with their associated contacts, and supported community messaging about contact tracing activities.

Testing & Lab Reporting Workgroup

The workgroup focused on collecting biweekly testing surveys related to specimen collection capacity and testing demand. The group also prioritized testing expansion across communities, particularly those medically at risk or within socially vulnerable groups.

**Education Workgroup
(formerly Education & Enforcement Workgroup)**

The workgroup educated businesses and community members on COVID-19 prevention measures. Later, the group expanded their scope to include broader, community-wide educational initiatives.

**Policy & Advocacy Workgroup
(formerly Policy & Health Alert Workgroup)**

The workgroup provided stakeholder input for health alerts, position statements, and testing criteria. Additionally, the group developed policy recommendations for local response efforts.

PreK-12 Consultation Group

This group was formed to outline guidance for safe school re-openings and to provide a space for the community to share their feedback and concerns.

Workgroups' Highlights

Indicator Monitoring Workgroup



Surveillance Dashboard

Provided daily updates on morbidity and mortality rates



Key Indicators Dashboard

Monitored disease indicators and recommended prevention measures to limit community spread



Self-Screening Tool & Hotline

Implemented bilingual platform to increase understanding among potentially infected individuals; provided testing guidance to public

Testing & Lab Reporting Workgroup



Supported the City's COVID-19 testing webpage with verified public testing sites



Established COVID-19 testing guidance for the community healthcare providers



Created and maintained daily test result reports to estimate the testing percent positivity rates from local and private labs



Expanded testing efforts among clinics, hospitals, and testing sites for specimen collection and processing

Contact Tracing Workgroup



Collaborated on community messaging to improve community response to contact tracers and case investigators



Incorporated community feedback to strengthen contact tracers' communication



Developed graphics for Answer the Call campaign to increase community cooperation with contact tracing, with support of Education Workgroup

Workgroups' Highlights

Education Workgroup



Connected with local businesses to address COVID-19 misinformation and internet literacy among community members



Created community messaging to improve COVID-19 health outcomes, including the "3P" campaign to prevent, protect, and provide



Developed social media influencer campaign

Policy & Advocacy Workgroup



Provided guidance to city and county leadership on multiple issues, including reopening restaurants and bars, outlining capacity determinations, and implementing curfews on holidays



Created health advisories for evolving pandemic conditions



Supported dissemination of city and county resolutions

PreK-12 Consultation Group



Initiated Virtual Community Forum model to discuss issues facing PreK through 12th grade educational institutions



Provided input to inform health orders issued by the Health Authority

With the added pandemic of COVID vaccine misinformation across the nation, along with widespread, public vaccine access, the need to improve health messaging among marginalized populations in Bexar County became increasingly urgent.

Pre-existing disparities exacerbated during the pandemic, along with nationwide civil unrest, catalyzed City Council to declare racism as a public health crisis in August 2020. This proclamation committed the City of San Antonio to address social injustices and address the root causes of health disparities that perpetuate poor health outcomes.

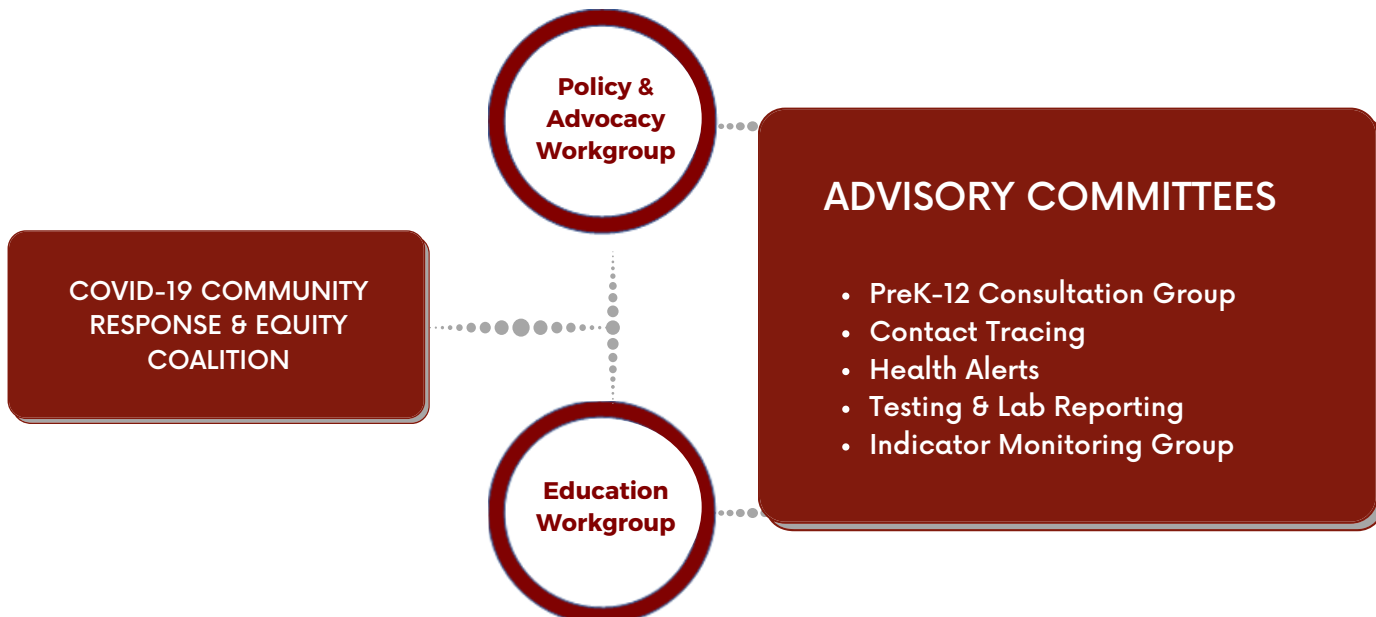


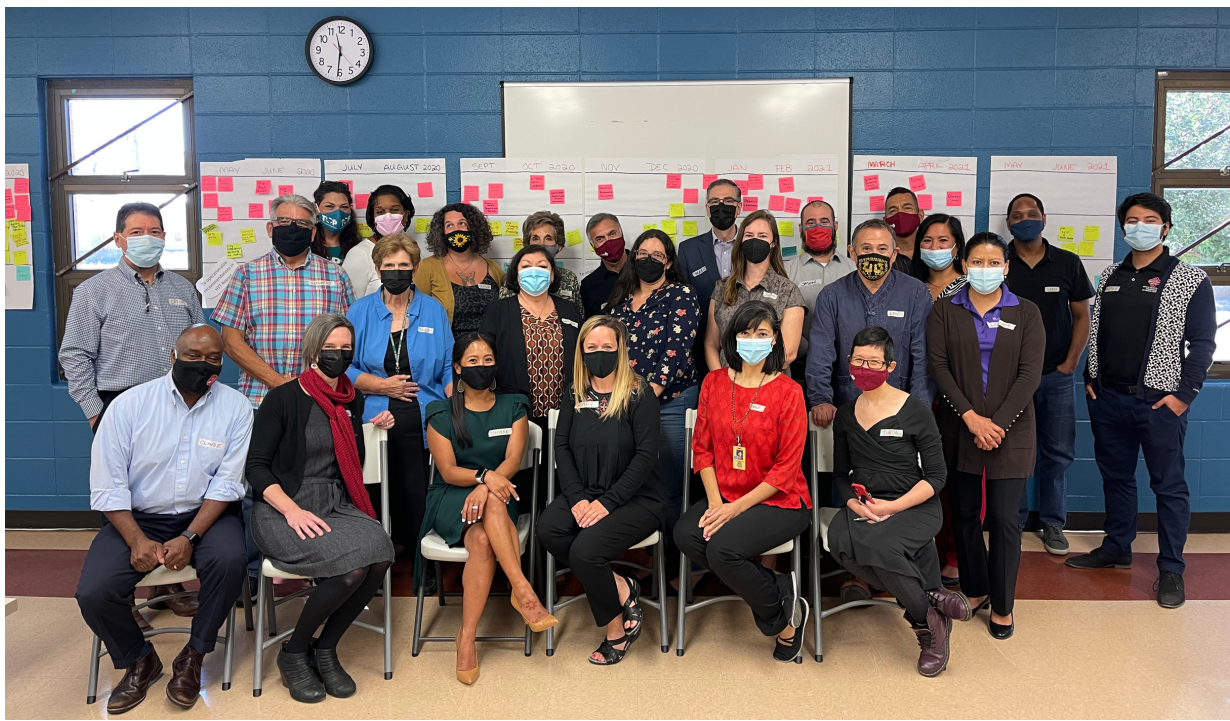
L to R: Teri Castillo (District 5); Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia (District 4); Phyllis Viagran (District 3); Jalen McKee-Rodriguez (District 2); Mario Bravo (District 1); Ron Nirenberg (Mayor); Clayton H. Perry (District 10); John Courage (District 9); Manny Pelaez (District 8); Ana E. Sandoval (District 7); Melissa Cabello Havrda (District 6)

In November 2020, the CRC became the COVID-19 Community Response and Equity Coalition (CREC). By incorporating equity as a fundamental component, standard operating procedures ensured all future efforts and interventions elevated equitable practices to the forefront of the coalition's collective decision making.

In response to the evolving pandemic phases and to make the best use of talent and resources of the various workgroups, three work groups transitioned to ad hoc status. This allowed CREC members to redirect their focus to the most pressing workgroups at that time: Education and Policy & Advocacy. All partners were encouraged to serve in the workgroup(s) that best reflected the mission of their respective organizations. The CRC leadership and support team remained at the helm for the new CREC. This team was comprised of two co-chairs (Metro Health Director and an external partner) and eight Metro Health support staff.

COALITION STRUCTURE

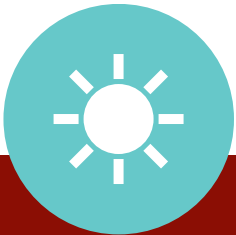




CREC key stakeholders gathered in September 2021 to discuss the future vision of the coalition.

In an effort to produce an honest reflection of the coalition for this report, a report task force formed to describe the journey of the CREC, capture processes implemented, and solicit partner feedback to inform future emergency response efforts. The report task force developed a questionnaire for partners to describe their motivation for joining the CREC, the strengths of the coalition, as well as opportunities for improvement. The below diagram describes the five overarching themes shared by CREC partners.

Partner-Generated Themes



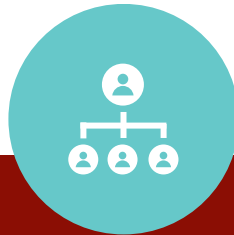
Transparency

Dashboards and townhalls elevated organizational perceptions and enhanced transparency.



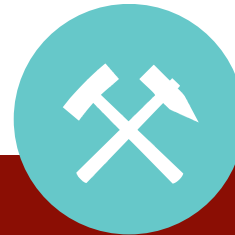
Partner Engagement & Collaboration

Cross-sectoral collaboration during this time of crisis was innovative and important for a coordinated response.



Leadership Roles & Responsibilities

Coalition created a space for shared responsibility and, while partner engagement varied and leadership changes were a challenge, efforts persevered.



Community Capacity

Coalition successfully operationalized HTT guidance and recruited entities to strengthen coalition efforts.



Community Relationships

Equity framework prioritized the community voice and built ongoing community relationships.

Looking to the Future



Community-Informed Blueprint: Developed by aligning partner feedback with Public Health Forward, a 2021 framework for modernizing public health systems (Public Health Forward: Modernizing the U.S. Public Health System, 2021)

The review of this coalition's evolution and analysis of partner feedback sheds light on the essential role that community partnership and collaboration can play in the continuing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in future public health efforts.

The COVID-19 Community Response and Equity Coalition's collective vision for the future will unite community and partners from various sectors to share thoughts, understand challenges, and celebrate wins to reduce health inequities. Coalition building is challenging and not without conflict, but the persistence of the coalition speaks to the deep commitment of partners to the San Antonio community.

The CREC is grateful for Metro Health and its community partners that remain committed to these efforts and to the essential role that community partnerships play in addressing public health.

This vision of the future will address health equity from a holistic standpoint and confront the challenges related to housing, food, and transportation as a means to create an equitable playing field for all residents to achieve greater health and well-being. The partnerships established through the CREC will evolve and expand as Metro Health moves into this next phase of growth.

The CREC will remain focused on advancing health equity in San Antonio's marginalized communities through close collaboration with community leaders, partners, and Metro Health.

Public Health as a Team Sport

COVID-19 Community Response & Equity Coalition

The COVID-19 Community Response and Equity Coalition was chosen as a **2022 Innovative Practice Gold Awardee** by the **National Association of County and City Health Officials** (NACCHO) for their submission titled *Public Health as a Team Sport: COVID-19 Community Response & Equity Coalition*.



The CREC is one of four local health department programs to receive this national recognition and was honored with this award during the **2022 Award-Winning Best Practices** from Local Health Departments Panel during the 2022 NACCHO360 Annual Conference in Atlanta on July 20, 2022.

The CREC's membership includes over 300 members, representing more than 100 organizations, from traditional and non-traditional public health sectors. Metro Health has served as the convener and facilitator of the CREC since its inception and thrives in this ongoing collaboration to advance health equity in San Antonio.

CREC Team:

Antonio Cruz, Carlos Rodriguez, Claude Jacob, Desiree Bellicini, Elisabeth Clymer Hockersmith, Illeana Tiemann, Kathy Shields, Len Trevino, and Olivia Johnson

The CREC would also like to congratulate their colleagues on two 2021 NACCHO Innovative Practice Awards:

- *Congregate Settings COVID Response Team*
- *Community Outreach and Communications: San Antonio's LHD Approach to COVID-19 in Communities of Color*

Acknowledgments

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Thank you for your continued support, expertise, and countless hours of input you have provided.

Alamo Area of Council Governments
Alamo City Urgent Care
Amerigroup
Archdiocese of San Antonio
Baptist Health System
Baylor College of Medicine
Bexar County Emergency Management
Bexar County Medical Society
Bexar County School Boards Coalition
Bexar Health Coalition City of San Antonio
Boys & Girls Clubs San Antonio
Center for Health Care Services
Centro San Antonio
CentroMed
CHRISTUS Health System
City of San Antonio
Clinical Pathology Laboratories
CommuniCare Health Centers
Convergent Diagnostic Laboratory
COVID Testing Station
Direct Med Clinic
Disability Access Office
Domesticas Unidas
Dominion Primary Care
Ecocentro
Edgewood ISD
Education Service Center Region 20
esd marketing
FastMed Urgent Care
Food Policy Council of San Antonio
Fuerza Unida
Geneus Health
Harlandale ISD
Haven for Hope
Health Collaborative
Healthy Futures of Texas Women's
Healthcare Coalition
HEB Pharmacy
iGenomeDx Inc.

Inpatient Healthcare of America (IPHA)
Japhet Media
Joint Base San Antonio
KIPP Texas Public Schools
Labcorp
Laso Health
LatinxVoces
LIFTFund US
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee
Service
Little Spurs Pediatric Urgent Care
Madonna Center
March of Dimes
Martinez Street Women's Center
Mayors LGBTQ Council
Methodist Healthcare Ministries
Methodist Healthcare System
New Creation Christian Fellowship
Northwest Vista College, SACHWA
Paramount Healthcare
Pride Center
Public Works Department
Quest Diagnostics
Razakaar Foundation
Reliable Revolutionaries
ReNue RX
River Walk SA
SA Clubhouse
SA Southwest ISD
SA Stands
Saint Mary's Hall
SAISD
Salud America
San Antonio Area Foundation
San Antonio Food Bank
San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of
Commerce
San Antonio ISD
San Antonio Sports

SanArte Healing & Cultura Clinic
Military Medical Precise
Pathology Lab
South Texas Allergy and Asthma
Southwest Texas Regional
Advisory Council
St Paul Catholic Church
Texas A&M - San Antonio
Texas Doctors for Social
Responsibility
Texas House of Representatives
Texas MedClinic
Texas Organizing Project
The SAVE Clinic
United Way San Antonio
University Health System
University of the Incarnate Word
UP Partnership
USAA
UTHealth San Antonio
UTHealth School of Public Health
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YMCA
YWCA